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ARCHITECTURAL PERCEPTION – THE THIRD PERSON WITHIN THE ARCHITECTURAL TEXT

Summary. This paper addresses the notion of perception within the architectural text. Exploring architectural semiotics and the notion of the third person, this paper addresses the continuous change in contexts and how this is perceived within the realm of the built environment.

DIE WAHRNEHMUNG DIE ARCHITEKTUR – DIE DRITTE PERSON INNERHALB DER TEXT DER ARCHITEKTUR

Zusammenfassung. Dieser Artikel beschreibt die Semiotik der Architektur und den Begriff der dritten Person untersuchend. Dieser Artikel beschreibt die ununterbroche Aenderungen in Zusammenhaenge und wie dieses innerhalb der gebauten Umgebung wahrzunehmen ist.

ARCHITEKTONICZNA PERCEPCJA – OBCOŚĆ NOWEJ FORMY W ZASTANYM ŚRODOWISKU PRZESTRZENNYM

Streszczenie. Artykuł poświęcony jest problemowi percepcji w architekturze i wprowadza pojęcie „the third person (thirdness)" – czyli w wolnym przekładzie „obcości" nowej formy w istniejącym kontekście kulturowym.

1. INTRODUCTION

The information age brings different methods and ways of perceiving our built environment. The present technology which also explores new worlds of perception – such as virtual reality – challenges traditional architectural thought and canon. It is seen that time tested methods of practice are often superseded by a technology that allows expedience in the architectural process and the ease of information transfer.

A challenge presented to architecture and urban design is to address those new programs and needs as existing building typologies evolve and new typologies are created. The progression and evolution of a multi-contextual global cultural brings with it new programs and needs. As new types are created the inference to existing contexts collides with newly created contexts. While continuously changing paradigms call for a change in the way elements are perceived, its importance is brought to the forefront as existing information and informational systems are continuously modified.

2. THE PERCEPTION OF ARCHITECTURE, ARCHITECTURAL SEMIOTICS, AND SUPERSTRUCTURALISM

The methods of informational perception may be portrayed within language communication, as, the perception of objects as signs attains a level similar to that of language. This is seen as an analysis of semiotics and perception in human experience demonstrates that, "the semiotic web of human experience that intricately interweaves linguistic semiosis with perceptual semiosis," . . . "is proximate to language." Indeed, the elements within semiotics are, "products of consciousness itself," and often the, "interpretation of experience fails to do justice to the creativity and productivity of consciousness."

"The experience that is present 'at the moment' is indebted to an act of representation, perception is indebted to a reproducing recognition." Recognition employs the aspect of the sign which reveals information to the perceiver and translator of that particular contextural language. Furthermore, translation or interpretation of the sign initiates communication between the perceiver and the perceived. "In the broadest sense, communication consists of the transmission of information regarding the perception of similarities and differences. The system of the built environment, like any semiotic code, is a complexly-ordered device for the cueing of such perceptions."

Perception and translation is bound to language and textuality whether on the purely sensory level, or while experiencing an object directly, or on an intellectual level – where the relation of signification may be distinquished from the vehicle conveying it (signifier) and the object it conveys (signified). It is from within the sign that the built environment is perceived and from which translations and interpretations are formed.

Traditionally, architecture's morphological construction relies upon the sign and its components. It is seen that both the linguistic sign and the "architectural sign is a combination of a formation (that-which-signifies) and a meaning (that-which-is-signified)." Regardless of the field of practice or study, the signifier as object delineates that which is signified. Together, as the signifier points to the signified, they form the sign. It is the experience of

architecture as object that binds it to the signifier and as a signifier architecture is bound to the translation, interpretation, and reading of itself as a signifier.

Experiencing and perceiving the object through the signifier in and as architecture, mediates between the signifier and the signified. "The objects of experience as such, thus, depend in every case on signs, and they themselves further differentiate within experience into other signs, so that one object, which as object represents itself also through associations of various kinds to represent other objects besides itself. In that way, an object comes to be a sign as well as an object in its own right."

Superstructuralist and deconstructionist thought begins with the disruption of the motion of the the signifier towards the signified. This is demonstrated as Derrida and others explore the notion of disruption as found within the dialectical relationship of the Sausserian Sign. He sets forth the idea that disruption is a breach within the traditional movement of the signifier towards the signified as seen within the sign. It is seen that Derrida's aim in this is to create a loss of security in order to supersede the dialectic, to renounce identity and meaning. The disruption of the movement of the signifier towards the signified causes the signifier to defer to other signifiers, thus creating a chain of signifiers. This results in, "a state of perpetually unfilled meaning that exists in the absence of all signifieds."

The state of unfilled meaning or the deferment of the essence of meaning, found in the form of a chain of signifiers, may be seen as distortion, noise, or disorder, which continuously disrupts the architectural status quo – disrupts the dialogue between the interlocuters of the sign, the signifier, and the signified. A disruption of the traditional subject-object dichotomy often causes interlocutor's to begin an endeavor to exclude the distortion. If and when the exclusion of noise is achieved, the product of the endeavor would be a clarity of conversation, albeit a clarity that is different from what had existed prior to the disruption. Whether or not there is an attempt made to exclude noise, the influence of the disruption can not be reversed. Indeed, the interlocuters must unite to be one in the endeavor of attempting to ignore the noise, or to include the noise partially or fully into the existing system. Through this process the noise, the distortion, as it appears in urban contexts and architecture yields a new context which avoids any previous formulation.

An exploration of the notion of the third person finds its position, as seen in relation to the diptych of the Saussurean sign, is to disrupt the movement of the sign. This third person is of utmost importance to the sign. If the sign is, "stripped of its thirdness, the sign slips back into the dyadic order of mere actual existence or, perhaps even further, into the monadic order of mere possibilities and dreams beyond which there is nowhere to go."

The arrival of noise or disruption also precludes the separation of the 'same' from the 'other' in architecture. It is seen in architecture and other fields of study that, "the most profound dialectical problem is not the problem of the Other, who is only a variety – or variation – of the Same, it is the problem of the third man. We might call this third man..., the prosopopeia of noise."

The questioning of architecture and the perception of architecture as put forth by the Serresian third person, is what faces architecture today. The displacement caused by the third person may be excluded, ignored, or utilized as a catalyst in a transitional period of awakening, a re-discovery of archite-cure's identity. It is through displacement that architecture may gain a necessary perspective on itself in the determination or creation of its identity.

Within systems that appear complacent the introduction of noise or chaos as a third person in translations, interpretations, or readings may provide a consensus and a different way to perceive the familiar, the known, and the unknown – "in order for there to be an agreement, there has to be a Babelian situation." Faced with the multiplicity of texts and contexts the introduction of the third person provides a need for translation and interpretation.

The perception of a sign, as stated above, questions the traditional dyadic and dialectic position of the sign with the insertion that to be properly semiotic a thirdness must be present. "The sign not only stands for something other than itself, it does so for some third, . . . for the relation of sign to signified to exist in its proper being as semiotic, regardless of whether that relation exists dyadically as well, reference to the future in a third element, the interpretant, is essential. And this third element is essential, regardless of whether the thirdness is actual here and now or only virtual and waiting to be realized."

3. THE PERCEPTION OF MULTI-CONTEXTURAL ARCHITECTURE

The perception of multiple contexts within new architectural building types may be considered as a reversal of Ekphrasis – images into text - by construc-ting contexts out of texts. This is seen as informational, social, and political influence to any particular architecture or urban environment with the unco-vering numerous layers of existing information. Those layers of exisitng informational text form in an urban context a basis, 'founding texts', upon which changes to those urban layers are made. Within the realm of change, there may be displacement, addition, or assimilation of those texts into new contexts throughout the temporal continuum.

The creation of new texts or contexts involves a thirdness in the ascertain-ment of similiarities and differences found in each context and between contexts. "To create a text is therefore to become aware of the difference between physical surroundings and objective world and to play with this

difference, thereby erecting a system of signs at once expressly in conscious of the difference and enhancive of it."

Differences between contexts and the perception and internalization of those differences may be described within two areas of thought. The first case, direct perception, is when the perceiver apprehends a certain part of the built environment, and, without going beyond it, differentiates, as a necessary aspect of it. In the second case, indirect perception, the perceiver apprehends a part of the built environment, and then advances beyond it by tracing a connection with some other context. The notion of indirect perception contains similarities to what is referred to as a "genuine sign." The genuine sign and indirect perception allow multiple readings and translations of the intersection of contexts.

An indirect perception of the interplay between contexts allows reading and translation on the margin and between the lines. To be in-between lines assumes the presence of a middle, a third person. The middle or betweenness occurs here in translation whenever a new language is introduced. The introduction of one language upon another presupposes a disruption of the existing status quo where the disruptive elements act as the third person.

"In any given environmental setting, the array of copresent objects exist as components in a variety of interrelated sign systems, each system addressed to partly unique and partly redundant functions. It is characteristically the case that the same object formation will have variant meanings and behavioral associations in different contexts, or even in the same context at different times. Moreover, both object formations and their conceptual associations change over time, often in different ways." This is evident within shifting paradigms and seemingly continuous change present at the end of the twentieth century. The arrival of new information and new contexts provide varying meanings within the everpresent interrelated sign systems.

The task for architecture is to distinguish between differences in meaning as global awareness and interdependency becomes predominant within general architectural thought. "In other words, every architectonic code specifies which disjunctions in formation are to be correlated to differences in meaning. Not everything in a built environment is meaningful in quite the same way. Some differences may be trivial, irrelevant, and normally overlooked by the code, while others, seemingly minute to an outsider, will often be profoundly significant to the native user of a given built environment." Architectural semiotics assists with the translation, interpretation, and perception in understanding different architectural texts and contexts.

Perception through architectural semiotics translates the importance of texts and contexts as something that is 'Other.' It is through that perception that acknowledges the interaction of the 'Same' with the 'Other'. "To be a sign, it is necessary to represent something other than the self. Being a sign is

a form of bondage to another, to the signified, the object that the sign is not but that the sign nevertheless stands for and represents." It is the temporal difference and otherness which are "constitutive for . . . the structure of the experience of an object, which can be identified and held on to as something presently perceived only in anticipation of an interpretative expression."

As seen here, the sign plays an important role in architectural contexts. The sign in conjunction with the third person opens a different way of perceiving architecture and the built environment. They point to the sometimes avoided 'Other' in architecture and often relies on that other in order for self definition. The sign, "depends on something other than itself. It is representative but only in a derivative way, in a subordinate capacity. The moment a sign slips out from under this subordination, as frequently happens, at just that moment does it cease for a while to be a sign. A sign seen standing on its own is not seen as a sign, even though it may remain one virtually. Thus on its own, it is a mere object or thing become object, waiting to become a sign, perhaps, or having formerly been a sign, perhaps, but, on its own, not actually a sign at all."

A realization of the 'Other' in global architecture is indicative of the otherness that is found in the specifics of the built environment whether that architecture is of a global, regional, or local nature. The perception of the architectural sign also occurs within this realm with its recognition of interrelated systems. "As a system of signs, a built environment does not exist in a vacuum but is co-occurrent with ensembles of other sign systems in different media. Each sign system offers certain advantages over others under the varying conditions of daily life."

The reading of a multi-contextural environment, involving the sign, is not nor does it necessarily strive for closure, but instead, rests upon the present in which translation and perception attempts to unravel the complex weaving of past and present contexts. "The same structures which we have already experienced in a confused and pre-reflective situation are continually transposed to a reflective realm where they open the way for ever more elaborated descriptions. It is not a matter of piling superimposed hierarchies one on top of another; rather, the trajectory of intentions transposes content into operation and at the same time displaces..." It is the displacement caused by the thirdness in the sign that compels a translation of intermingled contexts and it through that displacement that fresh perceptions and readings are formed, often from unfamiliar combinations and viewpoints. If it is found that the, "built environment suggests certain 'readings,' then such 'messages' may be decoded inside-out or upside-down, unilinearly or as a series of simultaneous embeddings, and so forth" in endless combinations.

The introduction of different texts and contexts into a singular architecture context – should one exist and consequently creating a multilingual architec-

ture – finds fecundity within that singularity that has become displaced. "In this actively polygot world, completely new relationships are established between language and its object (that is, the real world) – this is fraught with enormous consequences for all the already completed genres that had been formed during eras of closed and deaf monoglossia." Present contexts are bound to the past and it is questionable whether it is possible within an age of information and global interdependency for an architectural context to exist as a singularity.

It is through polygot architectural semiosis that the perception of the built environment, as the architectural object is perceived as writing, requires continuous re-reading of changing contexts. Through this type of writing the significance of the built environment changes with each new reading throughout the temporal continuum. It is seen that, "writing quarantees that a text can always repeatedly be read in arbitrarily changing contexts," and that, "writing holds... the possibility of a repeatable readability that transcends everything in this world."

4. CONCLUSION

Context is boundless it is boundless in regards to the possibilities that are present when addressing different and new contexts. The boundlessness of context is an indicator of the availability of any context for further description and that contexts can not be codified because of their ever changing nature. It is through the boundlessness of contexts that a "new cultural and creative consciousness lives in an actively polygot world. The world becomes polygot, once and for all and irreversibly. The period of... languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end. Languages throw light on each other: one language can, after all, see itself only in light of another language."

An architecture of transliteration provides a means for a perception of a basic context to become acquainted with other contexts and the beginning of an internalization of those contexts.

"A built environment is an ongoing, dynamically unfolding array of signs, existing spatially and temporally. A given environmental setting reveals the existence of sign-formations of contrastive relative ages much in the same manner that a given sentence will reveal the co-presence of formative elements with different histories." A polygot approach to the perception of architecture provides an environment for continuous readings and translation of the architectural context as civilization evolves and passes through temporal contexts.

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Omówienie

Współczesne technologie odkrywają nowe światy percepcji i podobnie jak zmieniająca się rzeczywistość są wyzwaniem dla tradycyjnej myśli architektonicznej i jej kanonów.

Rozwój i ewolucja wielowątkowej i wielokierunkowej globalnej kultury świata kreuje nowe programy i potrzeby. Wyzwanie współczesnego projektowania architektonicznego i urbanistycznego jest adresowane do tych właśnie nowych programów i potrzeb użytkowych, jakie rozwijają się i ewoluują w istniejących typach budynków i jakie są kreowane przez nowe typy obiektów.

Metody informacyjnej percepcji mogą być opisywane poprzez język przestrzeni. Poznanie uwypukla aspekt znaku, który wyjawia informację odbiorcy i tłumaczy szczególny język kontekstu przestrzennego. Ponadto wyjaśnienie albo interpretacja znaku komunikuje, czyli przekazuje informację pomiędzy osobą poznającą środowisko architektoniczne a tym środowiskiem. Przedmiot jako oznacznik nakreśla znaczenie przestrzeni nie bacząc na doświadczenia praktyki ani studia teoretyczne.

Myśl superstrukturalna pojawia się z chwilą przerwania (zniszczenia nawet) mechanizmu ruchu informacji od przedmiotu do podmiotu wywołując brak bezpieczeństwa i utratę poczucia tożsamości. To zaburzenie w odbiorze środowiska kreuje stan niespełnionego znaczenia, a zwłoka w rozumieniu tego znaczenia powoduje powstanie łańcucha odbieranych przez człowieka jako (as

a noise or the third person) dysonans albo „obcość" nowego uformowania w znanym dotychczas kontekście przestrzennym.

Zaburzenie w odbiorze wywołane przez „obcość" może być całkowicie odrzucone albo przyswojone i przyjęte jako katalizator w przejściowym okresie odkrywania i budowania na nowo architektonicznej tożsamości.

Kreacja nowej formy albo kontekstu przestrzennego wywołuje uczucie obcości (thirdness) w analizie podobieństw i różnic znajdowanych w każdym kontekście i wewnątrz każdego uformowania przestrzennego. Znak w przestrzeni – „coś obcego" otwiera wiele nowych dróg odbioru architektury i środowiska budowlanego.

Zjawisko to występuje stale i wszędzie w bezmiarze kontekstów, których kulturowa i kreatywna rola jest obecna w aktywnym, różnorodnym i globalnym środowisku.